

# THE TRUTH ABOUT THE CONDITION OF OUR NAVY

By William A. Bird, Jr.

"ADEQUATE" is the favorite adjective of militarist and pacifist alike in describing the ideal of the American navy. One faction says our present navy is not adequate, the other that it is more than adequate.

The ideal of the present Secretary of the Navy is a "good, strong navy," which he believes we shall have in 1925, when his proposed five-year building programme is completed. But "good" and "strong" need to be defined, just as "adequate" does. Mr. Daniels does not say how strong the navy should be or what it should be good for.

The 1913 report of the General Board of the Navy said:

"The absence of any definite naval policy on our part, except in the General Board, and the failure of the people, the Congress and the Executive government to recognize the necessity for such a policy have already placed us in a position of inferiority which may lead to war, and this inferiority is progressive and will continue to increase until the necessity for a definite policy is recognized and that policy put into operation."

In other words, the country is plunged periodically into debate as to whether the navy should be increased or diminished and how much it should be increased or diminished, without a definite idea on the part of the great majority of the debaters, both civil and official, of what the purpose of the navy is and to what use it may eventually be put.

Naval experts declare it would be futile for the United States to prepare for purely defensive warfare on the sea. While they assume this country will never be the aggressor in war, they believe it will be necessary for the American navy to take the offensive from the beginning of hostilities—to take to the sea and stay there until it is defeated or has secured control of the waters surrounding this continent.

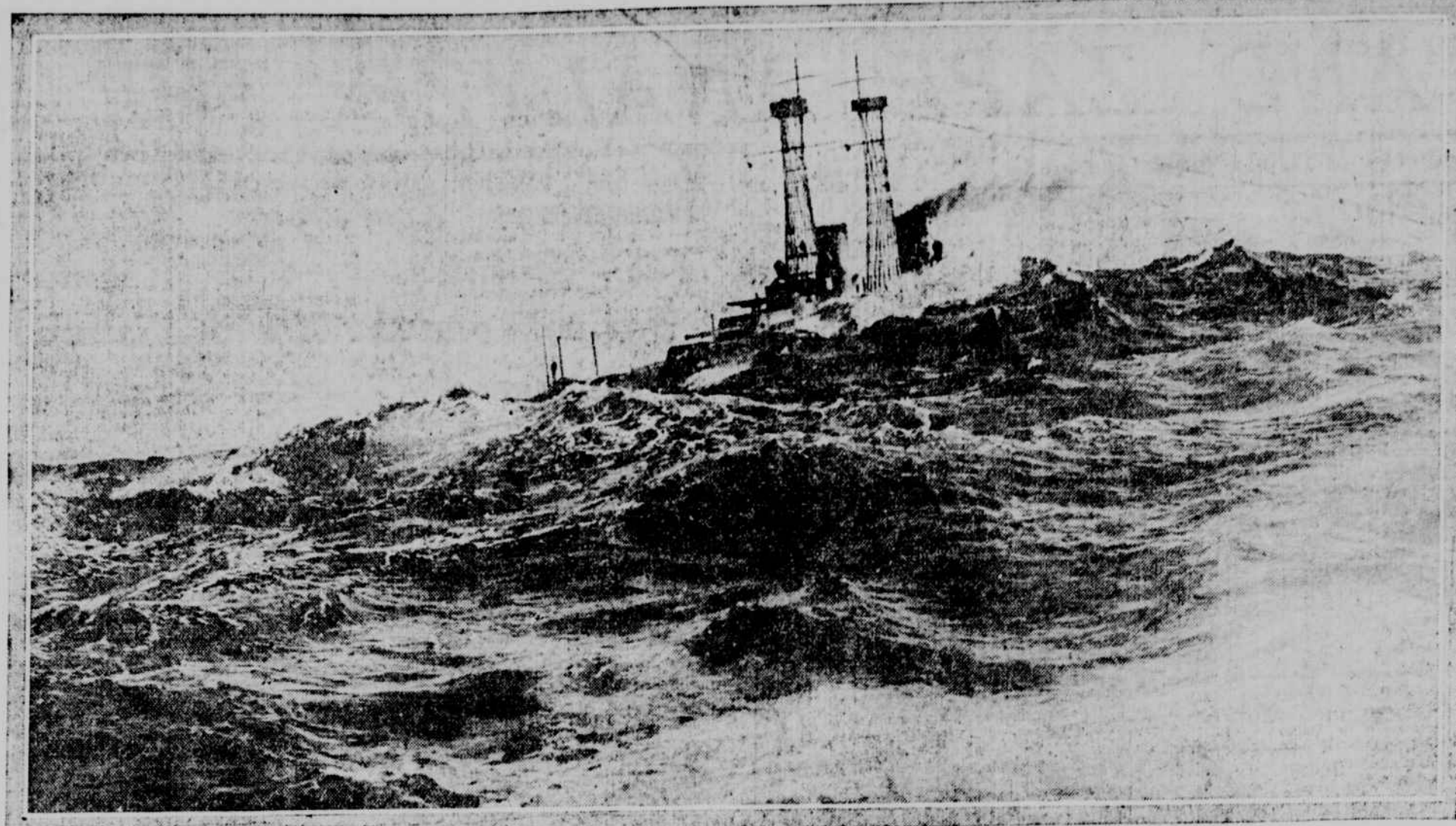
An understanding of this position, in which all naval officers concur, explodes the theory on which a great small-navy faction in this country bases its argument—that the only purpose of our fleet is to defend the coasts and harbors of the United States and to prevent a landing of hostile forces on our shores. This end they believe could be accomplished by mines, submarines and harbor defences, keeping the battleship fleet in port.

## THE SUBMARINE THEORY.

A logical development of this theory has led to a certain element of the belief that the United States should build no more battleships, but should place its whole reliance on the submarine, a purely defensive weapon. If this were done—even granting the ability of the submarines to prevent a landing of forces on our coasts, which naval experts do not grant—the sea-borne commerce of the United States would be swept from the seas, as Germany's is to-day, and the object of an enemy waging a commercial war would be achieved.

It becomes plain that the only valuable object of the American navy is to get control of the seas, to protect its ocean commerce and to stop that of the enemy. To do this it is necessary to have a superior battleship fleet, with a full complement of destroyers, scouts, tenders and other auxiliaries. At the first hint of war the American navy should be able to put to sea and take up a position from which it could make a favorable attack on the enemy and, if possible, destroy it.

It is therefore necessary to determine what foreign powers, or combinations of foreign powers, this country must regard as probable enemies and to construct a battleship fleet, with auxiliaries, superior to any force that



The United States dreadnought Delaware, one of Uncle Sam's biggest fighters, showing her mettle in the trough of a storm.

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## Government Records Show Only Nineteen First Class Fighting Ships Available, All in the Atlantic--- Ineffectuality of the Daniels Programme Demonstrated.

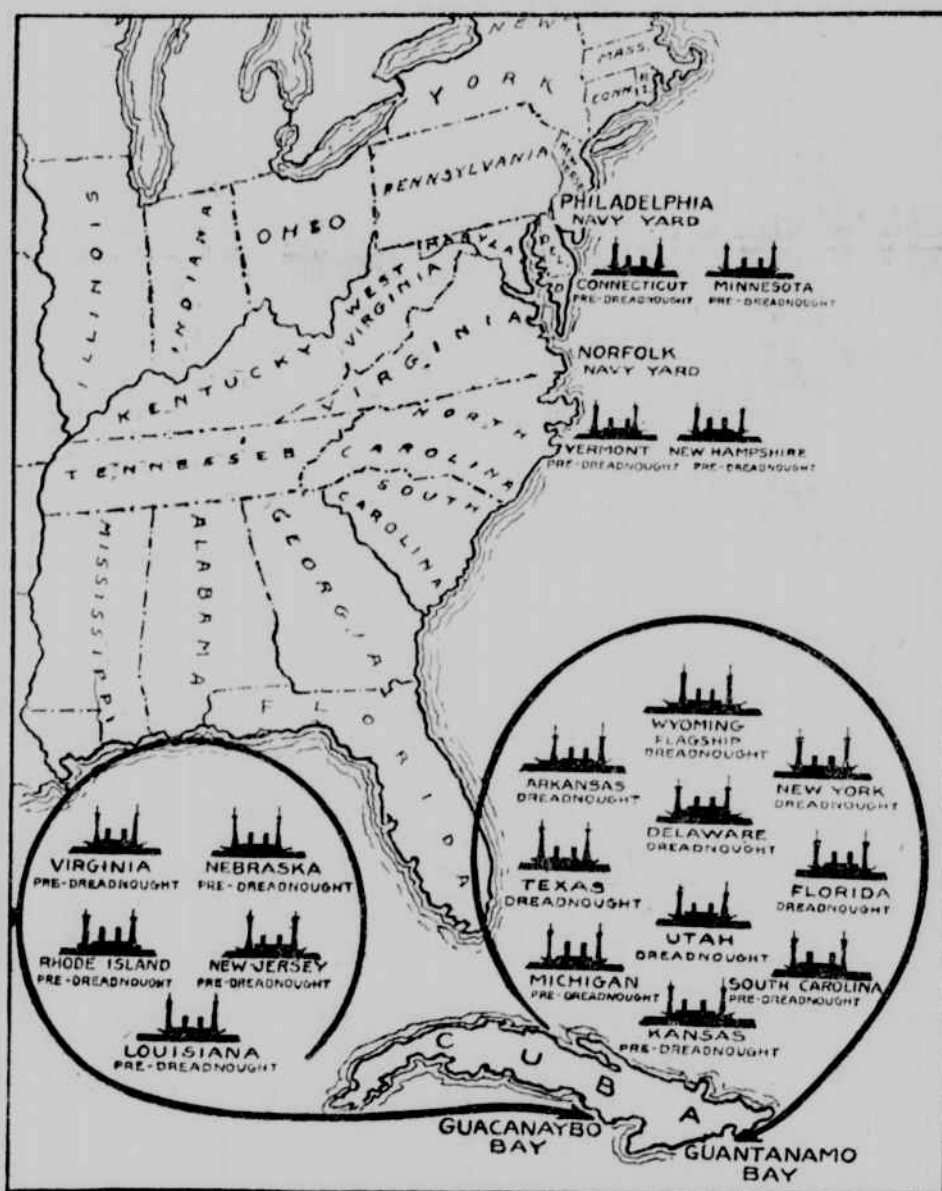
they might reasonably be expected to send against us. Anything less than that would be worse than useless, for it might give a false sense of security likely to invite trouble.

The United States has at the present time seven dreadnoughts of the first line in full commission, one in reserve because of faulty engines, three under construction and practically completed, one approaching completion and three others under construction—a total of fifteen. Two more were authorized at the last session of Congress, but work will not be begun on them until next winter.

Of the old pre-dreadnought type, now called battleships of the second line, there are fifteen in full commission, seven in reserve and three out of commission. Most of the last two groups are undergoing repairs, are without complements and could not be called into service on short notice.

The navy has five armored cruisers on the active list and four in reserve. These ships would be valueless in time of war until the main battleship fleet had disposed of the enemy's capital ships, except that in the event of an American defeat they might be used as commerce raiders until the enemy ran them down. There are also in the navy five first class cruisers, two second class and fourteen third class, more than half of which are in reserve.

The navy is divided into fleets and squad-



Our Available Big Fighting Ships and Where They Are.

rons, each of these divisions being, theoretically, assigned to a particular duty.

The Atlantic fleet, in which the principal war strength of the navy is concentrated, is now performing manoeuvres at the naval base in Guantánamo Bay, Cuba, and in Guacanayabo Bay nearby. It is subdivided into four battleship divisions, of which only the first consists exclusively of first line dreadnoughts.

With the dreadnought Wyoming, as Admiral Fletcher's flagship, the first division consists of the dreadnoughts Arkansas, New York, Delaware and Texas. In the second division, which is at Guantánamo Bay with the first, are the dreadnoughts Florida and Utah and the pre-dreadnoughts Michigan, South Carolina and Kansas. The third division, consisting of the pre-dreadnoughts Virginia, Nebraska, Rhode Island and New Jersey, is in Guacanayabo Bay with the pre-dreadnought Louisiana, attached to the fourth division. Four other pre-dreadnoughts of the fourth division are in navy yards—the Connecticut and Minnesota at Philadelphia and the New Hampshire and Vermont at Norfolk.

The dreadnoughts are the only effective fighting units of our Atlantic patrol. On the Pacific there is not at present a single first line ship with the fleet. The main Pacific fleet consists of an armored cruiser, two gunboats, a transport and five third class cruisers. The Asiatic fleet, nearly all of which is in the Yang-tse River, has one first class cruiser, two third class cruisers and nine gunboats.

In the present condition of the Panama Canal it would take weeks to mobilize an effective fleet in the Pacific, even supposing

a much larger force than that against the United States, despite the necessity of leaving a large part of the fleet in home and colonial waters to guard against possible eventualities. Japan could easily defeat the American Asiatic fleet and proceed against Hawaii and possibly the Pacific Coast, clearing off American merchant shipping as she went, before an American dreadnought fleet could round the Horn. When the American fleet did arrive the Japanese would be disposed in the most favorable strategic positions and with presumably superior forces probably able to control the situation.

The Atlantic fleet, the principal battle fleet and only effective fighting machine against a modern enemy which the United States possesses, has nineteen dreadnoughts and pre-dreadnoughts in fighting trim. One first class battleship—the North Dakota—is laid up because of serious engine troubles, which will necessitate the replacement of her turbines and place her out of commission indefinitely. Of the five second class battleships of the fourth division of the Atlantic fleet only one was able to attend the manoeuvres this year, the others being kept back for repairs.

The Connecticut has never been successful, owing to torsional vibration of her crank shafts at normal cruising speed, and it is declared that several other vessels are in similar condition.

Of the destroyer divisions, particularly important in the United States Navy because in the absence of fast scout cruisers the duty of scouting falls largely to them, twenty of the fifty units carried on the navy list as in full commission are operating with reduced complements, and of the thirty remaining only eighteen are attending manoeuvres with the main battle fleet. Many of the others are laid up for repairs; just how many cannot be told. Secretary Daniels refuses to make public the list of ships undergoing repairs.

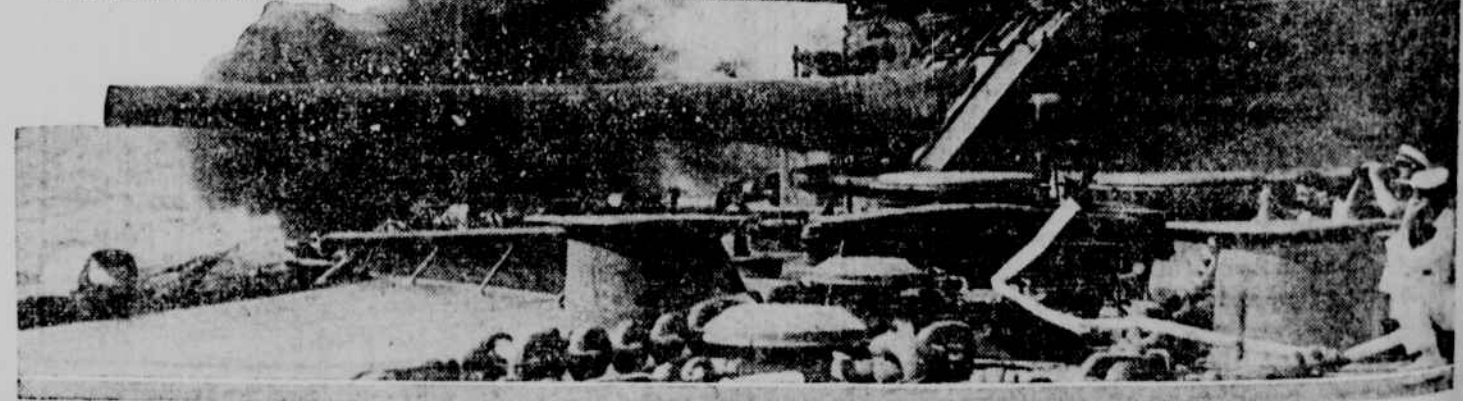
The effective fighting strength of the United States Navy, compared with the navies of Germany and Japan, is as follows at the present moment:

	Dread-noughts.	Pre-dread-noughts.	Battle-cruisers.
Germany .....	17	13	4
United States...	7	15	0
Japan .....	6	12	4

Although Japan is still slightly inferior to us in the number of dreadnoughts, she more than offsets this difference by her four battle-cruisers, fast armored ships carrying armament as heavy as that of a dreadnought and rated by naval experts as equal to a dreadnought under most conditions and superior in certain situations.

## Target practice on the Wyoming, flagship of the Atlantic fleet.

—Photo copyright Underwood & Underwood.



One year hence, when, it is assumed, the battleships Nevada, Oklahoma and Pennsylvania will be in commission and the North Dakota may have completed her repairs, the United States probably will be in a slightly better relative position. This temporary gain is due to the fact that delays in building battleships have brought an uncommonly large number to completion at the same time.

It is not known just how fast Japan and Germany are building, but granting them only a normal rate of increase the navies should line up in 1917 as follows:

	Dread-noughts.	Pre-dread-noughts.	Battle-cruisers.
Germany .....	21	13	6
United States...	11	15	0
Japan .....	8	12	5

No account has been taken of the American pre-dreadnoughts in reserve, of which there are seven. The lack of crews, a deficiency that is not provided for in Secretary Daniels' recommendations this year, would prevent their being called into action at the outbreak of the war, or before the supremacy of the seas had been decided.

## FAR BEHIND GERMANY.

Secretary Daniels' five-year programme will be completed in 1925. Supposing that by that time provision is made (though no mention is made of it in his recommendations) for sufficient men to put all the pre-dreadnoughts on the active list, and, following the estimates of naval observers of the probable strength of Germany and Japan at that date, the comparative tables will again show the United States far behind Germany and only slightly ahead of Japan. Japan's rapid gain, in spite of Secretary Daniels' recommended increases, is due primarily to the speed with which warships are built in Japan, while in this country at least four years must be allowed from the date of authorization until the completion of a battleship. Thus this may be the comparative strength in 1925:

	Dread-noughts.	Pre-dread-noughts.	Battle-cruisers.
Germany .....	40	13	14
United States...	27	25*	6
Japan .....	22	12	10

\*Including seven now in reserve and three out of commission.

The figures for the British navy have been omitted purposely. The General Board of the navy in 1903 formulated a naval policy which assumed the friendship of Great Britain. That policy called for the forty-eight capital ships by 1919. Secretary Daniels' programme falls far short of that ideal, and it would be idle, therefore, to pretend that it is intended to form a bulwark against Great Britain.

There are reasons, however, why the paper force of the present American navy cannot be utilized immediately in case of war. The first of these is the shortage of officers and men, which, according to figures compiled by Assistant Secretary of the Navy Roosevelt, now totals 18,000 men. That means that to put every ship in the navy in condition for war service and to man properly the shore stations the navy should have nearly 70,000 men instead of the present number of 51,500.

## THE SHORTAGE OF MEN.

Admiral Fletcher, commanding the Atlantic fleet, estimates that there is a shortage of 339 officers and 5,219 men in the Atlantic fleet alone, without including "4,000 or 5,000 additional to fully man the ships which I think ought to be fully manned upon the opening of hostilities."

"The most vital weakness in the Atlantic fleet," Admiral Fletcher says, "is the shortage of officers. It takes approximately ten years to educate and train an officer, and no amount of legislation can provide officers when trouble is imminent. Expansion of the navy is limited by the number of officers available."

"In January, 1915, I reported that every battleship of the Atlantic fleet should have the number of officers increased approximately 40 per cent to enable the vessels to attain their greatest efficiency. This shortage of officers still continues and exists in other divisions of the fleet, though more pronounced in the battleship squadrons."

Admiral Fletcher compares the number of officers on a typical American dreadnought, the Delaware, with similar ships of the British and German navies in time of peace. The Delaware has 33 officers, the Bellerophon 53 and the Helgoland 54. A personnel board ap-

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## NAVY SHIPS ON THE HOSPITAL LIST.

According to the Navy Department's figures, there were 63 vessels undergoing repairs on February 23. This does not include ships out of commission or rated "unservicable for war."

Following are the names of the vessels:

Dreadnought North Dakota.

Pre-dreadnoughts Georgia, New Hampshire, Vermont, Connecticut, Kearsarge—5.

Armored cruisers Maryland, West Virginia, Pittsburg, Colorado—4.

First class cruiser St. Louis.

Third class cruisers Tacoma, Salem, Marblehead, Raleigh, New Orleans—5.

Destroyers Duncan, Smith, Trippe, Beale, McCall, MacDonough, Roe, Walke, Lamson, Reid, Perkins, Sterett, Hull, Lawrence, Truxtun, Hopkins, Stewart—17.

Submarines D-1, D-2, D-3, E-2, F-1, F-2, F-3, G-1, G-2, G-3, G-4, H-1, K-6—13.

Transport Hancock.

Converted yacht Eagle.

Gunboats Sacramento, Princeton—2.

Tenders Bushnell, Dixie—2.

Torpedo boats Bagley, Morris—2.

Fuel ships Kanawha, Neptune, Brutus, Nero, Saturn—5.

Monitor Ozark.

Supply ships Celtic, Supply—2.

Torpedo practice ship Vesuvius.

The present effective fighting strength of the navies of Germany, the United States and Japan is as follows:

	Dreadnoughts	Pre-dreadnoughts	Battle-cruisers
Germany .....	17	13	4
United States...	7	15	0
Japan .....	6	12	4

Granting Germany and Japan the normal rate of increase in building and basing the figures on the Navy Department's plans for the next five years and the putting into commission of dreadnoughts already completed, the comparative strength in 1925 should be:

	Dreadnoughts	Pre-dreadnoughts	Battle-cruisers
Germany .....	40	13	14
United States...	27	25*	6
Japan .....	22	12	10

\*Including seven now in reserve and three out of commission.